



NEWS RELEASE

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Border Patrol rescue of immigrant in distress in irrigation canal caught on tape

EL PASO, Texas - Video surveillance operators at the Paso Del Norte (PDN) Processing Center captured Wednesday's rescue by El Paso Border Patrol agents of a distressed immigrant unable to navigate the swift water of the American Canal.

On Wednesday morning, agents observed a male subject attempting to swim across the American Canal at a location east of the "Fort Bliss Pipe", in west-central El Paso. Agents quickly responded to the location and threw a rescue ring and a rope to the immigrant in distress. Three Border Patrol agents were then successful in pulling the subject out of the canal.

The immigrant, identified as 37-year old Miguel Valdez-Loya, was examined by a Border Patrol Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and determined to be in good health.

Agents say Valdez-Loya has a prior history of being deported by INS to Mexico. He will be processed for reinstatement of removal, and held pending prosecution and formal deportation. Valdez-Loya was also given the opportunity to speak with a Mexican Consular Official.

To date in Fiscal year 2002, El Paso Sector Border Patrol agents have made 20 rescues of immigrants in distress in irrigation canals. Two immigrants have died in the canal this year, according to Border Patrol statistics. In Fiscal Year 2001, six immigrants drowned in the canal, while 16 were rescued.

As part of the binational "INS Border Safety Initiative", the Border Patrol has implemented water safety training for agents who work in areas of the waterways. Additional training has also been provided for Police and emergency fire/medical personnel in Juarez, and for members of the El Paso Fire Department.

Agents say the water level of the canals will remain dangerously high and swift for the remainder of the irrigation season through the month of October-2002.

-- USBP --

***VHS Video available to interested members of the media.*

For more information, contact El Paso Sector Public Affairs Office at (915) 834-8311